

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01

INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05 SSC-01 OMB-01 EB-07 OES-03 /083 W

----- 058247

R 271032Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY DACCA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5584

INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

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E.19. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, BG

SUBJ: NEW COUNCIL OF MINISTERS EQUALS OLD CABINET

SUMMARY: THE NEW DIRECTIONS WHICH WERE TO ACCOMPANY THE CHANGE TO A PRESIDENTIAL SYSTEM ARE NOT REFLECTED SO FAR IN THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS, 17 OF WHOM WERE SWORN INTO OFFICE JANUARY 26, ALONG WITH NINE STATE MINISTERS. ALL PREVIOUS MINISTERS AND STATE MINISTERS REMAIN IN OFFICE, WITH MANSUR ALI AS PRIMIN. KAMAL HOSSAIN HAS BEEN DESIGNATED MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND OF PETROLEUM BUT UNTIL HE RETURNS FROM ABROAD AND IS SWORN IN, PRESIDENT MUJIB WILL HOLD HIS PORTFOLIOS, ACCORDING TO A BDG ANNOUNCEMENT. SIX NEW MEN HAVE BEEN ADDED, MOST OF THEM LONG-TIME AWAMI LEAGUE ASSOCIATES OF MUJIBUR RAHMAN. THEY ARE A.H.M. KAMARUZZAMAN, FORMER COMMERCE MINISTER AND PRESIDENT OF THE AWAMI LEAGUE; KORBAN ALI, MP AND FORMER VICE PRESIDENT OF THE AWAMI LEAGUE; DR. A. R. MALLIK, FORMER HIGH COMMISSIONER IN DELHI AND VICE CHANCELLOR OF CHITTAGONG UNIVERSITY; DR. MUZAFFAR AHMED CHOWDHURY, CHAIRMAN OF THE UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION AND FORMER VICE CHANCELLOR OF DACCA UNIVERSITY; MOHAMMADULLAH, FORMER PRESIDENT OF BANGLADESH; AND ASADUZZAMAN KHAN, MP AND PROMINENT BARRISTER WHO JOINED AWAMI

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LEAGUE IN 1969. THE VICE PRESIDENT SWORN IN JANUARY 25 IS SYED

NAZRUL ISLAM, FORMER MINISTER OF INDUSTRIES AND ACTING PM IN
MUJIB'S ABSENCES. END SUMMARY.

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

1. THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS AND DISTRIBUTION OF PORTFOLIOS FOLLOW:
PRESIDENT SHEIKH MUJIBUR RAHMAN--PRESIDENT'S SECRETARIAT (CABINET
AND ESTABLISHMENT DIVISIONS); MINISTRY OF DEFENSE
VICE PRESIDENT SYED NAZRUL ISLAM--MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND
PLANNING COMMISSION (FORMERLY HELD BY MUJIB)
PRIMIN M. MANSUR ALI, MINISTRIES OF HOME; COMMUNICATIONS (RAILWAY,
ROADS, HIGHWAY, PORTS); POSTS, TELEPHONES AND TELEGRAPHS;
SHIPPING, INLAND WATER TRANSPORT AND AVIATION (SHIPPING FORMERLY
HELD BY MUJIB)
KHONDOKAR MUSHTAQUE AHMED--MINISTRY OF COMMERCE
A.H.M. KAMARUZZAMAN--MINISTRY OF INDUSTRIES (FORMERLY HELD BY
NAZRUL ISLAM)
MOHAMMADULLAH--MINISTRY OF LAND ADMINISTRATION AND LAND REFORM
(FORMERLY HELD BY PHANI MAJUMDAR)
ABDUS SAMAD AZAD--MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE
PROF. MD. YUSUF ALI--MINISTRIES OF LABOR AND SOCIAL WELFARE; AND
CULTURAL AFFAIRS AND SPORTS (LABOR FORMERLY HELD BY ABDUL MANNAN)
PHANI MAJUMDAR--MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT, RURAL DEVELOPMENT
AND COOPERATIVES
MOHAMMAD SOHRAB HOSSAIN-MINISTRY OF PUBLIC WORKS AND URBAN
DEVELOPMENT
ABDUL MANNAN--MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY PLANNING
ABDUR RAB SERNEABAT--MINISTRIES OF FLOOD CONTROL, WATER DEVELOP-
MENT AND POWER; FORESTS, FISHERIES AND LIVESTOCK (FORESTS FORMERLY
HELD BY MUJIB)
MANORANJAN DHAR -- MINISTRY OF LAW, PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND
JUSTICE (JUSTICE IS AN ADDITION TO TITLE)
ABDUL MOMEN--MINISTRIES OF FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES; RELIEF AND
REHABILITATION
ASADUZZAMAN KHAN--MINISTRY OF JUTE (FORMERLY HELD BY MUJIB)
M. KORBAN ALI--MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (FORMERLY
HELD BY MUJIB)
DR. AZIZUR RAHMAN MALLIK - MINISTRY OF FINANCE (FORMERLY HELD BY
TAJUDDIN AHMED AND THEN MUJIB)
DR. MUZAFFAR AHMED CHOUDHURY - MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC
TECHNOLOGICAL RESEARCH AND ATOMIC ENERGY (RECONSTRUCTED MINISTRY;
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YUSUF ALI FORMERLY HELD EDUCATION;
AND KAMAL HOSSAIN, TECHNOLOGICAL RESEARCH & ATOMIC ENERGY, ALONG
WITH NATURAL RESOURCES)

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2. ALL THE MINISTERS OF STATE RETAINED THEIR PORTFOLIOS:
DEWAN FARID GAZI -- COMMERCE DIVISION, TEA BOARD, CONSUMERS
SUPPLIES CORPORATION, INSURANCE AND TOURISM
PROF. NURUL ISLAM CHOUDHURY, INDUSTRIES
ABDUL MOMEN TALUKDAR, LOCAL GOVERNMENT, RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND
COOPERATIVES DIVISION
REAZUDDIN AHMED, FORESTS, FISHERIES AND LIVESTOCK
DR. KHITISH CHANDRA MONDAL - RELIEF AND REHABILITATION
MOSLEMUDDIN KHAN -- JUTE
TAHERUDDIN THAKUR -- INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING
NURUL ISLAM MANZUR -- COMMUNICATIONS
K. M. OBAIDUR RAHMAN - POST, TELEPHONE AND TELEGRAPH
END UNCLASSIFIED

3. THE NEW MINISTERS. THE NEW MINISTERS APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN
SELECTED PRINCIPALLY FOR THEIR POLITICAL RELIABILITY RATHER THAN
FOR THE PARTICULAR TALENTS THEY MIGHT BRING TO THE ADMINISTRATION
OF GOVERNMENT.

(A) KAMARUZZAMAN IN JANUARY 1974 RESIGNED AS COMMERCE MINISTER IN
ORDER TO SUCCEED MUJIB AS PRESIDENT OF THE AWAMI LEAGUE. A LONG-
TIME POLITICAL LIEUTENANT OF MUJIB, KAMARUZZAMAN, AGE 49, IS
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CONSIDERED A "MODERATE"; WHEN HE WAS AT COMMERCE HE PROFESSED TO EMBOFFS THAT HE WAS A STRONG ADVOCATE OF THE NEED FOR PRIVATE FOREIGN INVESTMENT IN BANGLADESH AND COMPENSATION FOR NATIONALIZED FOREIGN PROPERTY.

(B) KORBAN ALI, 51, HAS BEEN A POLITICAL AGITATOR SINCE THE FOUNDING OF THE AWAMI LEAGUE AND WAS FREQUENTLY ARRESTED ALONG WITH MUJIB IN PAKISTAN TIMES. A POLITICAL LEADER IN THE DACCA DISTRICT, KORBAN ALI LOST HIS POSITION AS SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF THE PARTY IN JANUARY 1974, PRESUMABLY BECAUSE OF MUJIB'S DISAPPOINTMENT WITH HIS PAST PERFORMANCE. HE IS NOT NOTED FOR COMPETENCE.

(C) BEFORE INDEPENDENCE, DR. MUZAFFAR AHMED CHOWDHURY WAS CHAIRMAN OF THE POLITICAL SCIENCE DEPARTMENT AT DACCA UNIVERSITY, AUTHOR OF SEVERAL BOOKS ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT, AND A CONSTITUTIONAL ADVISOR TO THE AWAMI LEAGUE. CHOWDHURY, WHO IS 52, HEADED THE (CIVIL) SERVICES REORGANIZATION COMMITTEE SET UP IN 1972, BUT ITS REPORT HAS NEVER BEEN IMPLEMENTED. THIS PASTHXUMMER, CHOWDHURY EXPLAINED MUJIB'S RUMORED CHANGE OF SYSTEM AS NECESSARY TO PERMIT THE INCLUSION IN THE CABINET OF COMPETENT NON-POLITICAL MEN. TO SOME DEGREE, CHOWDHURY HIMSELF FITS THIS DESCRIPTION.

(D) IN THE CEREMONIAL ROLE OF PRESIDENT, MOHAMMADULLAH NEVER HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO DEMONSTRATE THAT HE HAS THE QUALIFICATIONS TO BE AN EFFECTIVE MINISTER; HE IS NOTED PRINCIPALLY FOR HIS LONG AND UNOBTRUSIVE LOYALTY TO THE SHEIKH AND THE PARTY.

(E) DR. A. R. MALLIK, A LONDON UNIVERSITY-TRAINED HISTORIAN WITH A SPECIALTY IN MODERN INDIA, WAS VICE CHANCELLOR OF THE CHITTAGONG UNIVERSITY FROM 1965 TO 1971 AND THEN A FREEDOM FIGHTER AND SPOKESMAN ABROAD FOR BANGLADESH. AFTER INDEPENDENCE HE SERVED BRIEFLY AS EDUCATION SECRETARY AND WAS APPOINTED HIGH COMMISSIONER TO INDIA IN MID-1972. MALLIK, 56, WAS AMONG THOSE RUMORED TO BE THE NEW FOREIGN MINISTER; HIS APPOINTMENT TO FINANCE IS SOMETHING OF A SURPRISE. MALLIK WAS A LEADER GRANTEE IN 1959 AND VISITING PROFESSOR AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA IN 1961-62.

(F) ASADUZZAMAN KHAN IS AN INFLUENTIAL MP FROM MYMENSINGH WHO LED THE INDEPENDENT OPPOSITION IN THE PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY BEFORE JOINING THE AWAMI LEAGUE IN 1969. A FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE DACCA HIGH COURT BAR ASSOCIATION AND CHAIRMAN OF THE BAR COUNCIL, ASADUZZAMAN, WHO IS 59, WAS A MEMBER OF THE BANGLADESH DELEGATION TO UNGA LAST YEAR. HE WAS ALSO A LEADER GRANTEE IN 1959.

4. IT IS QUITE LIKELY THAT PRESIDENT COUNCIL OF MINISTERS IS AN INTERIM GROUP SELECTED QUICKLY TO PROVIDE CONTINUITY AND TO MAINTAIN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TAIN APPEARANCE OF EFFECTIVE ACTION UNDER PRESIDENTIAL SYSTEM. WE HEAR THAT MUJIB IS TALKING WITH OTHER PARTIES ABOUT THE FUTURE POLITICAL STRUCTURE IN BANGLADESH, AND ANTICIPATE THAT SEVERAL MONTHS MAY PASS BEFORE FINAL FORM EVOLVES.

CHESLAW

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